

THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

By

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Clark

THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

EVANGELISTIC AND CHURCH PLANTING WORK
AT THE BIG END.

TEN-TWELFTHS OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION
LIVE IN VILLAGES.

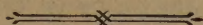
The author, Mr. Sidney J. W. Clark, during the last seventeen years has devoted the greater part of his time to the study of missionary principles and policies. He has visited most of the great mission fields of the world, some of them many times. He has made a special study of the village, having visited nearly six hundred market towns in two great areas in North China, together with several thousands out of the eleven thousand villages which these market towns serve. Before writing this brochure he visited India, Burma, Malay Peninsula, Ceylon, China, Manchuria, Korea and Japan especially for the purpose of meeting the leaders, both foreign and native, of missionary societies, with whom he discussed the problem of the indigenous Church, with special reference to the village. "The Indigenous Church" is a reprint of a paper written at the request of the Chinese and foreign secretaries of the National Christian Council of China. It was entitled "The Country Church and Indigenous Christianity," and was printed in English and in Chinese by order of the Council, but without endorsement, as a contribution to the discussion of this important topic.

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Object of Present Visit to China.

Commission III. Report, "The Message of the Church," has induced the writer to make this present visit to China. *En route* he has visited India and other countries. In these countries he has met many of the leaders of the people—natives and foreigners—and discussed the Report with them. The views herein expressed, have been freely discussed and, generally speaking, have not been seriously challenged. No one could be more surprised than the writer that this should be so, as, when only three years ago he made his last visit to the Middle and Far East, it would certainly have then been far otherwise. It is possible that Missionary Surveys have had something to do with the change. There is now a clearer conception of the magnitude of the unfinished task and of the utter inadequacy of foreign resources in relation thereto. There is, further, a growing feeling that there can never be established an indigenous Church except on an indigenous basis. A new conception of the need for the three main principles essential in establishing such a Church is now arising. Not only in the interests of the unfinished work which forms probably over ninety-nine per cent. of the whole, but in the interests also of the work already accomplished, a new stress must be laid on "Self-support, Self-government, and Self-propagation." These now appear somewhat stale and hackneyed expressions, but the principles they stand for are vital and cannot be better expressed.

It will be wise in order that misunderstanding may be avoided, to state quite clearly that self-support in relation to (1) Evangelistic work, (2) Institutional forms of work, and (3) Mission work in cities is *not now being discussed*. This communication is therefore concerned almost entirely with the question of *Church planting in the villages*. In any great work of a complex character it is wise first to divide the whole and then consider the parts in some logical sequence of steps, commencing at one which seems to be of fundamental and paramount importance. This is the course that has here been followed. The writer does know something about the work in rural China. In the villages of China and of the world eighty per cent. of the missionary work must be done, for eighty per cent. of the population of the world resides in villages. In the village it seems to be generally agreed that Christians are more easily made than in the city. Some of the reasons for the success of the work in the village are more or less obvious.

The devil is entrenched in the city, but in the village he can be attacked in detail. His army there is broken up into small

detachments. In the village also there is some leisure and freedom from the many distractions of the city. It is not, of course, intended to minimize the need or the value of work in the city. Both city and village have to be evangelized. Both are part of the world field covered by the Missionary Commission. But there is need to consider whether in view of its importance the village is receiving the attention to which it is entitled. An Anglican Bishop in India told the writer that it was reported that eighty per cent. of the people of India lived in villages and eighty per cent. of the missionaries in cities! If this is generally so there would appear to be grounds for the belief that the importance of the village has not sufficiently been recognized.

It is the writer's belief for reasons which will hereafter be stated, that Churches may be established which, from the first day on which they are planted, may be made entirely self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. It is further held that the village will be found to be an important factor in the evangelization of the city. When the writer was in Madras an eminent Indian leader, Professor Lazarus, stated that very few Christians were made in Madras, but that Christians were made in the village and conserved in the city. Enquiry generally seemed to confirm this statement, but it is not here suggested that Madras is representative of all cities, although it will probably be found that, in varying degrees, it is. If Christians then are more easily made in the villages, and if the flow of population is from the village to the city as is generally the case, then it would seem to follow that the village has an important part to play in the evangelization of the city. When, therefore, we work in the village we are at the same time working in the interest of the city.

For these, as well as for other reasons, this communication will not go outside a consideration of the question of Church planting in the myriad villages of China and of the world. It will of course be agreed that neither city nor village can be neglected but the contention is that the proportion of missionaries in the villages is actually too small.

The main argument will here be directed to show that the resources needed for *Church planting*, as *distinct from the preparatory work of evangelizing* the villages, are to be found *on the spot*, so that in the places where eighty per cent. of the work must be done, we need never be held up owing to a lack of foreign resources.

In view of the almost unimaginable magnitude of the unfinished task, this statement, if found to be correct, is surely a vastly encouraging one. It will be noted that the writer does not attempt to discuss the value of Institutional work, or the proportions in which Institutional forms of work in either city or village should be done. But he stresses the need frequently to test the value of such work by its bearing on *Church planting*. Medical and educational

work are the fruits of the Christian tree. The important thing is to plant the tree that will produce these fruits. It is a great thing to heal or to educate, but infinitely greater to plant a tree which produces the fruits of healing and enlightenment. To fail at this point is to miss the greater end which includes all else. We must not fail at the point of tree planting. There are to-morrow's needs to be met. The fruits may recommend the tree, and may satisfy to-day's needs, but only when a tree has been planted which has propagating power will to-morrow's needs as well as to-day's be met. For any reason whatever to fall short of, or to delay, the planting of the tree is to miss our goal.

We dare not delay in considering the questions we are here raising. If we are wrong in establishing village Churches on a dependent basis, then to-morrow we must undo what to-day we are doing. And the work of reconstruction will be infinitely more difficult than the work of construction. This is already being discovered, for many who now wish to place their work on a self-supporting basis, and find no difficulty in so doing in the case of new Churches, are finding great difficulty in doing so in the case of the older ones, which were started on a dependent basis. Every day of delay may, therefore, involve a painful pulling down process which cannot fail to exercise a destructive and baneful influence on present and future work.

The Bearing of Changed Conditions on Policies.

After over one hundred years of missionary activity in China the time is opportune for a review of the situation in regard to the conditions under which we enter upon the second century of our labours.

If the conditions are different we must be awake to the necessity of considering corresponding changes in policy, for conditions determine policy even if they do not affect principles.

In regard to educational, medical and indeed to all sides of the work, the missionary must have in mind that these must all one day be transferred, and he should do nothing to make difficult such transference, but should steadily pursue a course which, when the right moment comes, will enable his plans for transference to be most easily effected.

It is not to be supposed that this necessarily involves immediate drastic changes, but definite direction would be given to policies affecting the work in all its various connections. The first reaction would be on the missionaries themselves, for it would help them to turn their thoughts away from the past and to readjust their thinking to present conditions. For the rest, a steady, gradual evolution entailing little of a revolutionary character would generally follow. Whilst there may be differences of opinion in regard to

method and time, there cannot be in regard to the objective. For, theoretically at least, the foreign missionary is considered by all to be a transitory factor in the work, his part being to plant a Church which will carry on for all time the work of evangelizing each succeeding generation as it arises. And if the general trend throughout the world is any indication of what we may expect to take place, the Chinese will, ere long, settle this question, if the missionary does not himself do so. And this may be said in spite of present loyalty to a mission. The larger loyalty is to the Church. It must be so. It ought to be so.

Preparing the Church to be Left.

It is not unusual when we are urging the necessity of really believing that the Chinese are very much more capable of successfully sustaining, controlling, directing and developing, unaided by missionaries, the work of the Church, to be told of instances where this belief has been acted upon with disastrous results.

It would be profitable to examine the circumstances which led to the failures referred to. It might often be found that the Church had not been steadily prepared with a view to independence, and that, owing to exceptional circumstances, a Church otherwise trained, had *suddenly* to be deserted. This would not matter perhaps so much in cases where missionary domination or guidance had not been of too long duration. Indeed, it might be found that those most quickly left stood better than those too long nurtured by missionaries. The early history of the Malagasy Church would seem to be a proof of this. Left, during the period of great persecution, within ten years of the date of planting, for a period of twenty-five years, without financial help or any missionary guidance whatsoever, it nevertheless increased during that period tenfold in number, although it was entirely self-contained.

Other striking examples are available in China and elsewhere shewing how well Churches established on indigenous lines are able to support, control and expand their own work. Such examples are immensely encouraging to those, who in view of the vast work of world evangelization still to be done, realize their importance.

But it is not our present purpose to argue this point; the intention is rather to direct the thoughts of missionaries to the need of taking large views of the possibilities of expansion under indigenous leadership and on indigenous resources. The day of victory for the missionary is that on which he brings his work to an end. That end must now stand out more clearly than ever before, and, in entering upon this new phase of our work, it must dominate our thinking and our planning.

Reconstruction.

One of the great difficulties in entering upon a new phase of work is to effect the necessary turnover in policy and plan, but more particularly, *in thought*. Nevertheless, if we are to escape from the pull of the past and give the new its best chance, this must somehow or other be effected.

In discussing with the Chinese leaders and missionaries the possibilities of self-support and self-direction, it is often said that the chief difficulties will be encountered not in starting new work, but with work established from the first *on a dependent basis*. A Church once accustomed to dependence is one least attracted to independence. Dependence is natural to the child, but it is not to the Church, for the latter is often most virile in its infancy whilst the former is always feeblest then. We must start right.

In carrying into effect the new policy our first business must be to escape from traditions which have to do with a past from which we are now definitely turning our faces. For if we carry into new work things which are consistent only with the old, we may be piling up trouble to-day from which to-morrow we shall find it difficult to escape.

There are two tasks awaiting missionary and Chinese leaders to-day. One is the work of reconstruction, and the other of construction. Reconstruction is always difficult, but is necessary in order that old work may be brought on to the same basis as the new and into harmony with the need of conditions to-day. Construction is concerned with new work in areas as yet more or less unworked. It is safe to say that over ninety-nine per cent. of the unfinished task can therefore be done on the basis of a "clean slate," and, if we will, later reconstruction work can in the main be avoided. It is probably correct to state that reconstruction will be needed in the case of less than one per cent. of the total missionary work and ninety-nine per cent. will be concerned with more or less straightforward construction work.

In new work we may start right if we will profit by the experience of the past and with an appreciation of present-day needs and opportunities. Nevertheless, no work of reconstruction can fail to be complex and difficult. For reconstruction involves three things. The first, the scrapping of whatever is useless, having served its purpose; the second, the reshaping of whatever has still some power of service; and the third, the adding of whatever is required of the new to make the instrument with which we work efficient for its purposes to-day. It is better to turn our attention to what we will do in the case of new work, which we may commence with all the advantages of a "clean slate," free of the disadvantages of the "dead hand," and also with the advantage of past experience to guide us in *what to avoid*. It is rare that anyone enjoys the unique

opportunity possessed by missionaries to-day, for over ninety-nine per cent. of the work still to be done can be done on what is practically virgin soil and helped by experience culled from many lands during over one hundred years of work. When we have settled how we will do new work we shall know the principles we must follow in bringing old work to the same basis as the new. The writer has often gained valuable light by putting the following question to experienced missionaries: "Supposing with all the experience the years have brought you, you were free to start your work afresh on a 'clean slate,' what are the things you are now doing which you would not do again?" By asking ourselves and each other this question, we shall be helped to know what to rectify in the old and what to avoid in the new. We ought every few years to submit the question to experienced missionaries in all parts of the world. Their answers would be invaluable, for they would help us to avoid paying many times over for experience which might be had free of cost. And ultimately, the work everywhere, at least in its principles, should be brought to a common basis.

In China a new spirit is moving among the people; all doors are open. We have the Missionary Survey to guide us, and we now need to gather all available experience to help us in reconstructing the old and in constructing new work.

The best way to bring dependent Churches to an independent basis is to start new causes. Such causes will prove the possibility of so-called "infant" Churches being able to support themselves by their actually supporting themselves. This is the argument to which there is no answer.

The Living Tree.

It will be profitable now to examine the real needs of a so-called "infant" Church, so that we may see whether the current idea that all infant things must necessarily be dependent is really well founded. In (a) and (b), which follow, let it be noted how little the question of foreign money need enter into our consideration in planting Churches throughout the villages of rural China. And surely an indigenous Church should have indigenous roots; with roots in Europe or America how can a Church be indigenous?

(a) THE COST OF LIFE

Until the twos and threes *possessing the principle of the new life* have emerged from heathendom we cannot have a Church.

The Church must be formed of such. The work of evangelization is completed, in so far as these are concerned only when they come into this great possession. Up to this point it would be as futile to plant a Church, so called, as to plant a dead stick. *But no limits need be set to the potentialities of life.* Given life, and all things are possible. Life cannot be purchased, it is a gift. It can be handed

on from one to another, but its price is not a money price. It came to the missionary himself as a gift ; as a gift he must pass it on to the heathen he evangelizes, and these, in turn, must propagate what they have received. But it cannot be propagated by those who do not possess it. They may have education, wisdom, wealth and every other gift, but, lacking life, they cannot propagate life. The emphasis must be laid first, therefore, on *life*. Only living things have propagating power.

(b) PLANTING THE TREE

(1) *The Christian's resources in direct communion with God.* This tree (the Church) may be vastly helped or hindered by good or inefficient planting. Life comes to all from one Source, and communication with that Source is necessary for its continuance and development. Do we, from the very beginning, so stress the resources the Christian has in the Divine that his first thought will be toward God rather than towards man ? Do we teach the people with a persistence and insistence which carries conviction that man's every need is to be met in God, and that His inexhaustible resources may at any moment, anywhere, and under any conditions, be tapped by prayer ? And do we insist that the truth of this teaching may be daily tested in all the circumstances of life ?

If we do, then this dependence on God will mean that the chief step towards making a Church independent of *man* has been taken.

God will answer prayer through human agencies when He so desires, but it makes all the difference whether the people habitually turn first to Him—or to His agents.

To teach the infant Church to go *direct* to the Source of power and life is the short cut in the preparation of the people to do without the missionary and so to establish an indigenous Church.

Habitually, to teach a Christian convert to relate his needs directly to God's power is to pass him through a preparatory school, which, for this purpose, has no equal. If he unnecessarily turns to us, our help will mean that time and money must be unduly expended on the living, when this should be reserved for those to whom we are chiefly sent, viz : the spiritually dead. If he is trained chiefly to look to God he will be increasing his own life without hindering the spread of life to others, thus robbing the dead. This point cannot be too strongly driven home or too frequently insisted upon. It is one which, even in the most elementary stage of his development, he can readily understand, and it cannot too soon or too strongly be pressed home. When once a man gets life he should henceforward be trained to join forces with all who are propagating that life. The tree is not well planted if this is not stressed.

(2) *The Christian's resources in his fellow Christians.* The value of fellowship for mutual teaching, access to human resources, encouragement, helpfulness and growth is self-evident. The

missionary or the preacher cannot always be on the spot, but one's fellow Christians are at hand and can at any time be turned to. What this will mean to little scattered handfuls of Christians cannot be easily estimated. Next, therefore, to dependence on God, Christian inter-dependence must take precedence to dependence on missionary or mission-paid helper.

In proportion as this need is stressed in the early training of the Christian Church, so will the Church's power to grow from within and to spread, increase. So that the missionary or pastor should not be regarded as indispensable even in times of special crisis or need. The members of each little Church have great resources in each other, and the development and constant use of these resources should constitute one of its chief means of strength and growth. The price of fellowship is fellowship. To give is to get fellowship. Therefore, to train a Church in all that appertains to mutual helpfulness in things concerning the welfare of its members will not only result in a growing inter-dependence, but, what is equally important, a growing independence. Two ends are, therefore, achieved, each of which increases the liberty of the missionary for wider work, not only without weakening, but actually to the strengthening of the Church. And at the same time an essential part of the preparation of a Church which is ultimately to be left is being furthered. Christians must be trained to practise fellowship and to know its value experimentally. This also is an essential in effective tree planting.

(3) *The Christian's resources in the written word (the Phonetic Script)*. Do we sufficiently realize that because the Word is bread it is a matter of paramount importance that it should be accessible?

If we do, then the teaching of each convert to read becomes an undeniable duty. If a man is dependent on a missionary or a teacher for his daily food, either the missionary or teacher must always be on the spot, or the man must starve or go hungry. Moreover, if a Church is illiterate, it will not only often be hungry, but it will hinder or frustrate the evangelization of others, for the hungry cannot for long be left. It would, therefore, seem obvious that if we are to retain our mobility and to spread out and be constantly breaking new ground, food must be accessible. Consequently no Christian should lack the power to read. Indeed, the work of evangelization should be regarded as incomplete whilst any Christian lacks this power. But to teach Christians to read should largely be the work of the Church. One should teach another. The missionary must teach the first converts, but afterwards this duty ought to fall upon those who have themselves been taught. As partners in the work this duty should be made clear to all. In China the importance of each Christian being able to read has resulted in a simplified script by means of which reading, even in that most difficult of languages, is now an easy matter. Neither schools nor

trained teachers are necessary, for any one who knows the script can teach it, and, having themselves been taught without charge, must teach without charge. Food, therefore, can now be made accessible to all.

The bearing of this access to the Word on the strengthening of Christian character, the independence of the Church, the power to propagate, and, consequently, on the freedom and enlargement of opportunity for the missionary, is obvious. It is obviously necessary that the simplest form of phonetic script be adopted, and adapted to each dialect area, that it must aim to give Christians direct access to food, that it must be easy to teach and easy to learn. Other aims, however legitimate, if they add anything to the difficulties of an illiterate, adult village Christian learning to read, must be cut out. To give such direct access to food, without the help of a paid intermediary is in itself a big enough objective, without it the possibility of self-support from the beginning is greatly lessened and a vital link in an otherwise complete chain is missing.

(4) *The Christian's resources in Christian service (the secret of growth)*. On what does a Church grow? It expands chiefly on the growing experience of its members. When a man ceases to grow, it will be found that his experience has become established. But with every act of willing obedience there comes new experience, and with it more life. He that *doeth* shall *know*. Shall know more, shall have more to tell, shall be more vital in the telling. A man does not grow merely on preaching or teaching. He grows on *practising* what he hears or is taught. He does not necessarily profit by *much* teaching. One truth which he hears and practises will carry him further than many truths which are listened to but soon forgotten because left unpractised. The emphasis is to-day laid unduly on services rather than on *service*. The man who is busily engaged in practising is learning. He may listen to a thousand sermons and be the worse for them if he does not forthwith go out to *do*.

The idea that if a beginner is not constantly receiving new instruction he is in danger of going back requires to be reconsidered. It does not accord with experience. A very little that is worked out in terms of practical life goes a great way.

If a little congregation of Christians is presented with one or two truths, and then told to go out and practise them, they will soon be ready for more, and they will discover more. They will tell each other of their new discoveries, and what they tell will be a thousand times more inspiring than the sermon the busy missionary will preach, or the talk of the pastor or teacher which may be only remotely related to the emergencies of life.

We need not unduly fear to leave for a while men and women who have been trained to hear, in order that they may go out and *do*.

It is necessary also in all preaching especially to emphasize the fact that a preacher stands up not to say *but to do something*. Only to that extent will his preaching be worth anything. No preacher will ever deliver a worthless sermon who clearly and definitely addresses himself to secure reactions in the life and conduct of his hearers. For is it not true that *there is no reception without reaction*? If this is so, we need not unduly stress the urgency of much preaching or teaching, but rather seek for enough of the kind that produces the desired reaction.

We have, up to this point, stated some of the more vital factors underlying wise Church planting.

It is easy to see that a Church so planted would be able to stand the shock of a sudden separation, should there ever come a time when for political, or other reasons, it became necessary for missionaries suddenly to leave. And it should not any more be urged that, because here and there instances can be given of places where the work has gone back as a consequence of the Church being left, such lapses are by any means likely to occur in cases where, from the beginning, the Church has been *prepared to be left*. If a Church is, in effect, *trained to be dependent*, there is little to wonder at if it cannot hold its own when it is suddenly compelled to be independent. There is no more valuable test of the soundness of a policy than its bearing on the coming away of the missionary. If it facilitates his departure by facilitating a well-rooted Church to carry on the work, it may be regarded as sound. If it delays his departure the soundness of the policy may well be questioned.

Unpaid Pastors and Workers the Key to the Missionary Position in the Villages.

We are so accustomed to feel, because a professional ministry and paid workers *seem* to be essential at home, that they are therefore necessary in the foreign fields. What *seem* to be needs at home we are apt to regard as needs elsewhere. Indeed, we think too habitually in terms of the West. But ere long we shall be compelled to forget the West if we are ever to adjust our thinking to conditions and real needs in the fields in which we are working. We require again to study the missionary methods of the first two centuries of the Christian era when the success attained reached levels never since equalled.

And those who would say that what was possible then is impossible now should visit the places where the same methods are achieving similar results to-day.

When the vastness of the unfinished task begins to be visualized and realized, as it soon will be, and we are able to measure our missionary resources against the work which lies ahead, we shall find ourselves face to face with factors which have always existed

but have never before entered into our calculations. And we shall then be compelled to do our sums all over again. To-day we are satisfied with the old conclusions because of unknown or forgotten factors, but when we are confronted by these we shall have no alternative but to re-think the missionary problem.

The vision of an almost illimitable need and of *limited* resources will make shipwreck of many a theory now held to be unshakable. We are satisfied now *because we do not know*. We none of us know, but we soon shall. And it will be well to prepare ourselves for the upheavals this knowledge will produce.

There can be little doubt that the key factor to the developments of the future Church will be the unpaid pastor and lay worker. Indeed, he is now and always has been the key but we do not yet know it.

There are already to be found large mission centres where all the Churches are, and have been from the start, dependent on the ministrations of lay pastors who *give* their services. The mission-paid men devote their services to the heathen. The Christians look after themselves *and the heathen as well*. The lay pastors have brief periods of teaching at the centre, and then pass on to others any new light they have received.

And little though they may seem to know, they know more than those to whom they preach can exhaust in daily practice. When the people are ready for more they will get more, for those who *do*, learn much. This is a fascinating subject upon which more light will ere long be available, but, meanwhile, it will be wise to think about it and to find out all that experience has to teach on the subject.

It is significant that in one case seen by the writer, and perhaps the most striking, the work was begun under a native bishop whose cathedral was erected by the people themselves at a cost of £25 ! A cathedral very unlike some we have seen, *and which need not delay the day of self-support by a single moment*. A cathedral, perfect for its purpose and admired as one fit to be compared with St. Peter's, in Rome, or St. Paul's, in London ! It is significant that this bishop spoke of the superior advantages he had over other missionaries in that God had never given him any money !

Must we not, therefore, now begin to magnify the lay, unpaid pastor and worker, and to measure progress largely by the numbers of such men and the outcome of their work ? No task then need seem too great to attack when such a force is being multiplied and when money need enter so little into our consideration.

The China Survey enables us mathematically to prove that unless such men, during the next twenty-five years, do the **work**, in a large measure it must remain undone.

We are not now thinking of any sudden turnover in policy in regard to existing work, so much as whether, in entering new fields,

or developing work recently begun, methods that seem so full of promise should not be adopted in order that, when demonstrated to be successful, both old and new work may gradually be brought to a common basis. For the best way to convince the older Churches of the possibility of planting virile Churches by means of an unpaid agency is to prove that it can be done by *doing it*. Although we must consider the principles herein referred to in relation to all forms of work in cities and towns as well as in villages, for the moment, this thesis is concerned with the villages only.

Pioneer Work.

The idea that pioneer days are largely over is responsible for much mistaken emphasis in missionary policy. With 1,000,000,000 souls still to be evangelized, it is well for us to realize that we have as yet only touched the outer fringes of the missionary task. Soon we must advance pioneer work again with a new strenuousness. The Church must hold the ground won whilst missionaries press out to wider fields. The missionary must leave, but will not desert the Church. Indeed, under the conditions in which an independent indigenous Church will co-operate with the foreign missionary force, the relationship will probably be as truly intimate as ever it has been. Just as a mother leaves hold of a child in teaching it to walk, but does not desert the child, so the missionary will in the same way be available to further the interests of the Church whilst never obtruding his help; and, as elsewhere suggested, the help needed will probably be far less than is expected.

A study of the China Missionary Survey would seem to indicate that a considerable proportion of the missionary staff in the future will need to be reserved for mobile work, and to be used as the point of the wedge in breaking ground. Plans must be laid consistent with this policy, so that a base must be viewed not as a place in which missionaries stay, but from which they may operate. Nothing ought to be done which makes it difficult to pass on to new ground. Buildings should be rented rather than erected, and must be of a size and type in harmony with the policy to be pursued.

It may be that missionaries will leave a centre and again return. This will depend upon how the Church at the centre has been prepared and planted, and whether it has life, and it will also depend upon whether the tree is to be allowed slowly to produce fruits from within itself or is to have them tied on as if it were a Christmas tree! The business of the missionary is to come away, and from the day on which he arrives he should start preparing to come away. He is the transitory factor; the Church being the permanent factor in the work.

Indigenous Leadership.

(THERE IS NO LACK OF LEADERS)

Great emphasis is now properly being laid on this question. So great indeed that in recent years there has been an increasing flow of missionary resources into higher training and educational work, some think to the loss of less advanced but more urgent work. We need not at the moment discuss the question of the proportions which one grade of work should bear in relation to the others, but consider briefly certain factors which seem to be important. Those who have to work in the myriad unevangelized villages and small towns of China, India, and the other parts of the world will, of necessity, be of the people, and, in the main, they will lack any training beyond what is needed to do the simple, but fundamental work described earlier in this contribution.

The greater part of the work which has to be done in the next few generations should be done in village communities, for in these ten-twelfths of the human race reside. In the main the workers will find their training in the actual doing of the work, with such help as may come from casual instruction or teaching. And there is abundant proof that this is the natural order of growth, so that we may feel no alarm because we shall be building up from the bottom, for this is the normal and only safe way of building. The fact that missionaries are themselves educated, trained men and women, gives them high standards which they are inclined perhaps too early to fix for others. But a comprehensive view of the work in its extent and character should result in quick readjustments to the actualities of the situation. A new viewpoint is needed.

Leaders exist in every community. To find, help, and get out of the way of these is one of the best pieces of work to which missionaries can address themselves. Abundant proofs can be found of the capacity of these leaders to do the work required ; while it is well to remember that the coming of the Kingdom need never be delayed through the lack of education or training as long as there are earnest, simple-minded souls, working among people of their own class, who can tell the simple story of the Gospel illuminated by a vital personal experience. The most difficult task before missionaries is perhaps to get out of the way of native leaders.

The greater part of missionary work, it may be repeated, must be done for many generations in the myriad village communities. And good men who can give ample teaching backed by the example of worthy lives must and will suffice for the early stages of propagating the Gospel. These will be able to sow the seed, and, if the reactions which we ought to expect, follow, a great leavening, which will ultimately result in widespread uplift, is bound to ensue. If these men can spread life and secure reactions which prove life,

they will be doing a work at this stage equalling the best that can be done by those possessing the highest qualifications, and the best training the colleges can give.

When the many are hungry, and bread is ample, we may and must be satisfied with dispensers who perhaps lack every qualification but the power to dispense. And this power, whilst possessed by some more than by others, is, in measure, possessed by all.

In this leadership of the people, by the people, contact with the people is essential, and this contact may count for more even than education and training, the price of which is so often loss of contact. For urgent, simple work, leaders are never lacking. The Almighty sees to that. And our work surely is urgent enough, involving as it does, life and death. In every group of men there is a leader; it is only when we aim to advance too quickly from simple, fundamental, work, that the supply of leaders dries up. If that work is well done the material out of which leadership for advanced work comes will also be abundant enough.

It would be well if we were to study this question of indigenous leaders more carefully. We might have then valuable guidance in our policies. At least we should be saved from basing our theories on the unreliable basis of the exceptional rather than on the normal and average, and we should discover that whilst leaders can be trained, *training does not necessarily make leaders*.

To be able to distinguish natural leaders, to give them the fullest opportunities to lead, to encourage and support them in their leadership, is one of the chief services a missionary can render. And if we will only be satisfied with natural growth and aim at uplift from the bottom, we shall have no lack of necessary resources either of men or money.

Church Buildings in the Village need never be any Charge on the Foreign Mission.

We have spoken earlier of the resources of the Church in regard to the development of life on its spiritual side. But the Church will also have needs which call for material resources. What are these? It will require a place in which to meet.

If we carry to the mission fields our Western ideas we shall be confronted with a big problem. If, on the other hand, we think in terms of need as these will appear to the East, this problem will vanish. For the Church has no needs which it cannot meet if they are purely indigenous needs.

It may be accepted that native Christians, without cost to the mission, will be able in any village community in any foreign field to provide a meeting place in which Church members may assemble.

This, as a matter of fact, is now so often done that no proof of its possibility is needed. It should be regarded as natural and

proper that the meeting place of Christians be provided by the Christians themselves. Help from the mission ought not to be offered or expected. Of course, if things from the West are *imposed* upon the people, *then the West must support what it imposes*.

But the essentials of life, so long as these are appropriate to the conditions of life, can and should be always met, not out of *imported resources*, but out of those available on the spot. There is no other wise line to follow in establishing a Church which is to stand strong and firm on its own native base. As long as the tree is in the East and the roots in the West, its life will be unnatural and precarious, and it cannot be called an indigenous tree. There should, therefore, be no cost to the mission for Church buildings.

Need any Chinese Pastor in a Village be a Charge on the Mission ?

Is it possible for a Church prepared according to the principles herein stated, to nurture itself without the aid of a mission-supported teacher or pastor ? There is much to warrant the belief that it can. Let us suppose that the little group of Christian men and women have first been trained by prayer to look to God for help and guidance ; have been taught to read the Word ; have been made to realize the necessity of a growing personal experience, and have shown how this may be gained ; and have also been shown the necessity of mutual dependence and fellowship. Let us suppose that the group has been well-rooted in these things before it has been organized as a Church. Who shall say in these circumstances that such a group will not be able from those resources to find nourishment which will sustain a vigorous, expanding life, even if outside guidance and teaching are withheld, or only occasionally given ?

If, therefore, independence is desired then a Church must be trained for independence. If a dependent life is regarded as inevitable, then it will be trained to look to missionary or pastor, and apart from these external supports its life will flag. In a word, training and preparation must be related to objective. We can attain either dependence or independence, but we must settle which we want. If a Church is found unable to stand, apart from outside support, we have no right to say it is impossible for it so to stand unless it has been prepared with this object in view. The missionary is to plant, not a scarlet runner needing props or sticks to hold it up, but an oak able to stand the fiercest blasts, even in its earliest days. Do not let us regard a tree which has such mighty inherent powers as if it were a feeble growth. History and our experience shew it to be far otherwise. When, therefore, we have well and truly planted a living tree, let us not forget the nature of the tree we have planted, or that it needs the

storm to bring it to its full strength. And, above all, let us not forget that its roots and resources are in God.

We cannot sow dependence and expect to reap independence. But what may we reasonably expect will happen if a Church is left which has been prepared to be left? It will hold little meetings for prayer; it will study the Scriptures; in time it will produce those able to teach, exhort, preach and lead in the work of propagating the Gospel; it will grow in works of benevolence and its growth will be from *within*. Or, if not so prepared it will rest more or less on missionary or pastor, and its life will be feeble, like that of a dependent child. The best agency for extending the work will be a tree well-rooted in its native soil. The relation between mission and Church should be one not of dependence or independence, but one of inter-dependence. Let it not be supposed that mission and Church will drift apart. That danger will come rather in the case of mission Churches prepared for dependence. Where there is recognition of mutual need in furthering a common task the tendency will always be towards a closer coming together.

The cost to the mission of sustaining life in each newly planted Church need be *nil*. That is why we may, undismayed, face, on limited foreign resources, an unlimited task—so much can be done, and better done, without money. Any young missionary may start work alone, without a penny, in a district with a great population and not despair of evangelizing the whole area and planting a Church able to stand alone, within his own lifetime, if he has the co-operation of the self-supporting Church he has planted. It is just a question of good seed, wise agriculture and self-propagating power.

Tree, Fruits or Both?

Leakage and waste in missions, as in anything else, are greatest at the joints, and can only be remedied by close dove-tailing to combine all parts within a well-knit whole.

It is lamentable to find that so often each department of missionary work tends to become more or less an end in itself. It was never so intended. But not until we habitually and continually test each part of the work in its relation to one single objective, viz: Church planting, shall we be able to avoid the disintegrating pull which is usually steadily at work. We must concern ourselves with the tree that bears the fruits, and not merely with the fruits. The tree we have to plant is a wonderful tree. Each and every kind of fruit needed for the healing of the nations is its natural produce and in "due season" is produced from within itself.

Education is in the tree, medical science is in the tree. Indeed, everything needed for the blessing and uplift of the nations is in this tree. But it must not be hothouse bred. It must be allowed to grow naturally. The fruits must not be forced or be hung on the tree, but come out of it.

Let us concern ourselves with the tree and if we plant it truly, we may rely upon it to yield all its proper fruit at the proper time and in the proper order. In saying this we are not challenging any particular form of mission work. In a long experience we have never seen a *wrong* kind of missionary work, although we have often seen work that has seemed to be out of balance, out of time, or which has seemed to be directed to secondary rather than to primary ends. But each form of missionary work, to be truly effective, must be a part of a single instrument devised to do a single work. It must have its place in a well-conceived combination and apart from such combination it may quite easily become even a destructive factor in the work.

The Organization of the Church

Just as it is unnecessary for us to concern ourselves with the organization of life, so it appears not to be necessary for us to concern ourselves overmuch with the organization of the Church. If the Church is living, then from within itself will grow the organization it will require at all stages of its development. Just as it is unprofitable to hang fruits on the tree, so it is unnecessary to impose upon it, *from without*, a foreign organization. In almost every foreign field a protest is now rising against over-organization, and ere long will rise against a Western organization, ill suited to an indigenous, Eastern Church in the comparatively early stages of its growth. The organization of the Church must grow with and come out of the Church. It will be remembered that David's friends combined to incapacitate him for the fight with Goliath by fitting him out with a foreign organization and too much of it. He was perfectly organized for victory with a simple sling, a quick eye, a nimble foot, and confidence in God and in himself. With a foreign organization upon him he would perhaps have stood no chance of victory at all. He would perhaps have fallen down at the critical moment and not been able to get up quickly enough. An awkward situation for anyone to be in with a giant rampaging around! But David did what an indigenous Church must do, upon which well-meaning but mistaken friends, desire to thrust a ready-made or foreign organization, ill suited, perhaps, to its needs. It must dare to give expression to its own growing and to assert its own individuality. When David did this he shewed the mettle of which he was made and gave an indication of his inherent greatness. We have too much machinery. It threatens to submerge us. A thousand wheels are revolving, and we appear to be "busy, yes, busy," but as a well-known preacher has said, "We may not be doing business"—at any rate not on the scale of the need or the opportunity. When a man is provided with two legs he is well equipped for locomotion. Are there not signs that if a missionary at the present time were

given an opportunity to organize a man for locomotion he would provide him with as many legs as a centipede, under the mistaken idea that with each additional leg would come an increase of speed ! The present need is to reduce and simplify organization rather than to add to it.

Co-ordination

Delivering One Blow—Not Many Individual Taps.

This is the secret of successfully utilizing resources. What do we mean by this ? Of course it must be remembered that we are still thinking of work among the people who live mainly in villages. Let us suppose, then, that our work stands in the midst of a thickly populated district which we propose to evangelize and in which we aim to plant a Church. Let us further suppose that we have a hospital, a boarding-school for boys and girls, a missionary staff consisting of clerical, medical, and educational workers, and if the work has been some time established, native evangelists or colporteurs, or these otherwise may have been imported. How, with this staff shall we set about our task ? The following method may, at least, have a suggestive value.

It is not intended, in putting forward the following six points, to suggest that, as they stand, they have any special value as practical methods of work. They are set out to *illustrate a principle*—the principle of close co-ordination between each part of the work, so that, together, the parts may form a *single* instrument to achieve a *single* common purpose. The aim of all missionary work must be, as already stated, to plant a tree (the Church) which, in due season, will produce every kind of fruit, medical and educational, indeed all the fruits needed for the enlightenment, uplift, and blessing of the people. The planting of this tree is the short cut to all these ends. The doctor will, therefore, primarily be concerned with Church planting. Because, if he heals, but does not plant the tree of healing, he serves a transitory end, whereas he might still have healed but also have set in operation a process which long after he himself has passed on, will still, in an ever-increasing ratio, be producing fruits of healing. The same is true in the case of the educationist, and of every other type of worker. A single instrument, well-balanced and proportioned and so closely knit together as to reduce to a minimum waste or leakage of power at the joints where such are so likely to occur, should be our aim

(1) A group of one hundred villages will be marked as the first sphere of our operations. And we will make the educationist the point of the wedge in opening up the ground. We will send him out accompanied by one or two native workers, to visit these villages, and to teach a few likely men and women in each to read.

In China the simplified phonetic script can be used, and similar scripts may soon be available in India and in other countries. The introduction of this script immensely enlarges the possibilities of missionary work in all lands, for the problem of teaching Christians, and indeed the people generally, to read has now practically been solved. By means of the script, without schools or trained teachers, one person can teach another, so that the question of illiteracy can be attacked with a confidence which was formerly impossible, when only the Chinese character was available. It would seem, therefore, that if three or four in each village could be taught to read, a nucleus of literates would be formed constituting an enlightening influence, and yielding far-reaching, valuable and varied reactions. It must be remembered that many who are well qualified to speak, estimate the numbers of literate people in India and China (of those able to read) at little more than five per cent., and, of these, few will be found among the poorer classes.

If, therefore, in each village community three or four persons can be taught to read, and are able, if willing, to teach others, candles can be lit which may soon begin to illuminate the whole district.

The simplified phonetic script must be regarded as one of the greatest gifts ever given to missionaries as an aid in planting a Church which from the beginning is to be self-supporting.

But the system required must have a single, limited objective, and must be tested by its power to serve in Church planting and not first in relation to any other end. Before long this will more clearly be perceived. And the simplest system available must be adjusted to the need of *each* separate dialect area.

The first step in a well-considered programme of work for the effective opening up of territory, should be to teach a few in each village to read. The point of our wedge, therefore, will, as stated, be the educationist.

(2) Following close in the tracks of the educationist should come the colporteur. He will see that simple literature, suitable for beginners, is placed in the hands of those who have been taught ; he will endeavour to encourage, stimulate, and increase the fluency of readers and try to get those able to read to teach others. He will further supply them with simple aids for that work. This will be a piece of definite work which he will pursue uninterruptedly, if that be possible, until he has been to each of the one hundred villages. But during his stay in each village he will also make it his business to secure the names of sick people, and these he will send to the doctor at the head station.

(3) The doctor, following close on the heels of the colporteur, will then start the same round, taking the villages in the order followed by the educationist and the colporteur. He will take a simple medical outfit with him, and will see the sick whose names have been sent to him. If among them there be one or two cases

suitable for the hospital, he will send them to headquarters. There his colleagues will attend to their physical necessities, and when they are fit, the evangelists will teach them to read, and give them simple Gospel instruction. The work at the hospital will thus be *threefold* : the single aim being to send the patients back to their villages to shew, and to tell, the great things the Lord hath done for them, and to advertise His goodness.

(4) At this stage the ground will be prepared, and the people receptive and ready for the visit of a clerical missionary and, perhaps, a native preacher or two. These will commence the round of the same villages, and will preach to people, some of whom are now able to read ; who have had some teaching by means of the printed page, and in other ways ; who have witnessed the healing of their fellows and will, therefore, be ready and keen to listen attentively to those who come to apply to individual hearts and consciences the meaning of the work thus far done.

(5) We can hardly doubt that among the listeners there will be women whose hearts have been touched who will desire to know more. The moment, therefore, is opportune for the lady missionary, with one or two native women workers, to make the same tour. They will gather the women together and further teach them. This will bring them into touch with the children, and they will carefully note any boy or girl who seems to be good material to be sent to the missionary day or boarding-school. If a single scholar from each village can be sent to such a school, each village will, through that one, profit by the work of the school, and the influence of the school will in time be felt throughout the whole district.

(6) We will suppose that through these successive visits a good preparatory work has been done. Once again then the villages should be visited, but this time by all who can be spared, and a combined evangelistic effort be made with a view to gathering in those who prove to have been fruitful ground into which good seed has fallen. It is not too much to hope that here and there, if not in all the villages, the twos and threes will, as a result of the preaching, teaching, and preparatory work, soon be ready to be formed into, and be planted as, little Churches.

Thereafter, the rooting of the Church on the lines indicated in the earlier part of this communication will be proceeded with. It is difficult to suppose that co-ordinated effort, such as that suggested, would fail to have profitable reactions not only on the people, but on the workers too. All the departments of the work would definitely be directed to one common end ; each would have had a share in that work, and all would take part in the harvest. Each would be handmaiden to the other, and as the work of different agencies would be directed to a *single purpose*, the danger of hiving off on separate departments would be lessened and a grave danger in the mission be avoided.

When the first hundred villages had thus been dealt with a second hundred could be attacked in like manner, and the process continued until the whole area had been covered. It is not suggested that this method could be followed in every district, or that the scheme could be carried out anywhere without modifications such as ever-varying conditions and circumstances made necessary. The suggestion is made because it bears on the wisdom and, indeed, the absolute necessity of the closest co-ordination of effort at each mission station. Co-ordination and combination are too commonly regarded as valuable mainly in connection with inter-mission work, but they are needed not less at each head station. Indeed, they are required throughout the work and at every station.

It will be seen that in many of the vast districts for which missions are responsible, the head station at different stages of the work may require to be shifted. For this reason the type of buildings erected should not preclude such changes. Mobility ought never to be sacrificed, for a missionary force which loses its mobility loses at once its effectiveness. Indeed an immobile missionary force is a contradiction in terms for it may be questioned whether such a force has not ceased to be missionary. The idea of passing on must never be absent from the minds of a missionary force, and nothing should, therefore, be done which unduly stabilizes the work.

There are many further aspects of missionary principle and policy which require to be considered and any points submitted in opposition to our opinion or judgment will have very careful attention. We again repeat that we have to remember that our actions to-day must be based on existing conditions. We cannot blindly follow the methods or policies of the past, however good the results may have been. We honour the great missionaries who have preceded us, but if our work is to be equally good we must profit by what the past has to teach, without slavishly following lines which may no longer be suited to the needs and opportunities of to-day. We have to think in terms of a different world, and enlarged vision and opportunity. And our plans must be made, and our principles and policies adjusted, in view, not of the past, but of the present. We must not be afraid to cut ourselves free from all traditions which shackle us and prevent necessary readjustments. We must be free, as our predecessors have been.

Principles and policies must now be settled in relation to a fixed purpose. The replenishing of staff and the type of missionary ; the character and cost of new mission buildings ; the proportions of the different forms of work ; the gradual relinquishing or transference of certain of these forms, and all changes of emphasis in regard thereto, would be greatly affected by the fact that these would all be tested with reference to a *single* objective. More particularly and most important of all, would be the result in its bearing on the relations of the missionary to the indigenous Church.

For the missionary would see that, the transference of responsibility being involved, there must be a strenuous refusal to carry any burden which could be transferred to the people's shoulders ; and all his actions would be governed by the determination to build up a strong, virile, indigenous leadership, and to make the Church independent. He would always then be on the alert to discover leaders and to afford the maximum of opportunity to those who possessed the qualities required. He would gladly, therefore, magnify indigenous leadership, and as gladly see himself becoming a steadily diminishing factor in the work.

Reaction of Self-Support on the Missionary Himself.

Whenever a turnover from one basis to another in any form of work is made, such as from dependence to semi or to complete independence, such turnover cannot fail to affect many issues which at first glance may not seem to be involved. Take as an example the houses provided for the missionaries. No house, however large, will seem particularly inappropriate to a dependent Church, nor will any style of furnishing, or mode of living adopted by the missionary. But when absolute self-support is preached to people living in the poorest circumstances the reaction cannot fail to be somewhat revolutionary. But there are few out of a great number of missionaries known to the writer who would not willingly pay any price necessary to secure the advance of the indigenous Church. Indeed Societies will have to see to it that any changes made on the missionaries' own initiative do not unduly jeopardise their lives or lessen their vigour. The mission is involved in warfare and will take all the risks involved, but dead or disabled missionaries are of little value in advancing the work, except only *very occasionally*.

The magnitude of the task in relation to our resources must determine the scale on which we work. If with small resources we have a limited conception of the size of the task to be done, we shall work to a small scale and probably do intensive work. If, on the other hand, we see the actual size of the work we shall use a larger scale and do extensive work. In the former case we shall give much to a few, but in the latter a little to many. In the former case self-support will mean little, but in the latter everything to us.

Let me finish by saying that in view of the immensity of the unfinished work it would seem as though for many years to come, and in spite of all that the Chinese may do, large help from the West, both in men and money, will still be needed.

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